

## DALBY — CITY BUILT ON WHEAT

### Centenary Souvenir History of Municipality

Dalby, City of Wheatsheaves and Gateway to Queensland Oil, as the handsome cover proudly proclaims, is the title of a well-produced booklet "Souvenir History of Dalby," the citizens of which are now celebrating the centenary of the establishment of the municipality of Dalby. The History, which was compiled and designed by Mr. G. H. Wade, of Shorncliffe, Brisbane, has been forwarded with the compliments of the *Dalby Herald*, which has done a first-class printing and publishing job.

Dalby was proclaimed a municipality on 29 August 1863 by Queensland's first Governor, Sir George Ferguson Bowen, and the proclamation published in the *Government Gazette* of that date is reproduced in the booklet, which also is illustrated by many interesting historic and present-day photographic prints. These include portraits of the first Mayor, Ald. F. W. Roche, and other historically important personalities; the present Mayor and Mayoress, Ald R. C. Drew, M.B.E., and Mrs. Drew, and a group picture of the aldermen and executive officers of the present Dalby Town Council.

Dalby's actual birthplace is a spot on Myall Creek only a stone's throw from the existing town weir, which was for many years known as The Crossing. Henry Dennis who arrived at Myall Creek in 1841 was the first settler. He chose land for himself at Jondaryan, for Charles Coxen at Myall Creek, and for Richard Todd Scougall at Jimbour. Scougall built the first Jondaryan House in 1844 from bush timber. Richard Walter Scougall, a son of R. T. Scougall, managed Forest Vale in the early 'sixties for Messrs Tooth and Cran. His daughter, Miss Ruby Scougall of Sandgate, has furnished a copy of a letter written by her father many years ago in which he outlined the route followed by Dennis in 1840, and he went on to say that Patrick Leslie was travelling through New England about the same time.

#### HENRY DENNIS THE PIONEER

The letter goes on: "I have heard many discussions. . . as to who arrived first and I think they left their starting point about the same time. The first hut on the Darling Downs was at Jimbour. . . The first wool to cross the Toowoomba

Main Range was my father's. . . the teams were driven by Patterson River black boys in charge of my uncle, Charles Dunn. All this goes to prove that Henry Dennis had a big claim to be the first white man to set foot on the Darling Downs. "

Jimbour was stocked with 11,000 sheep in January 1842. Scougall's original holding consisted of 300,000 acres, stretching from the Bunya Mountains and Moola Scrub in the north and east to the Condamine River below Macalister in the south-west, and from about where Jandowae now stands to the outskirts of present-day Dalby. Scougall sold Jimbour, with sheep, cattle, and all improvements, to Thomas Bell, of Parramatta, for £3,200. The booklet traces in detail the history of Jimbour and the fortunes of the prominent and forceful Bell family. For many years Jimbour was "the last point west"—literally where the pavement ended and the great unknown heart of the continent began. Biographical details are also given of the late Mr. W. A. Russell, who in 1923 purchased Jimbour House and 5,839 acres of freehold from the Queensland National Bank for £2 per acre. The Russell Pastoral Company, of which Mr. Charles W. Russell is managing partner, has embarked on a massive water harvesting scheme, which provides for the conservation of more than 100 million gallons of water to irrigate crops and pastures on the property.

### SECURITY OF TENURE A PROBLEM

Many interesting facts relating to the early settlers are included in the booklet. Security of tenure was one of the biggest bugbears of the early settlers. Prior to Separation, an initial payment of £10 entitled the holder to a licence to take up not more than 30,000 acres for that sum. Squatters would apply for various tracts of country which were often chosen from some commanding position with the horizon as the boundary as frequently as not. These claims would be recognised and registered but no survey would be made for years to come. Later on, after Separation, this land had to be brought under the Queensland *Real Property Act* and caused trouble, delay, and confusion in "sorting out" the different holdings and where they met or converged. In many cases, as is noted in respect of the big stations surrounding Dalby, a tree might mark the actual spot where the imagined boundaries were mutually delineated.

The St. Ruth property, claimed by John Taylor, specified a "Marked Tree" and the Broad Water, which it was established was actually part of the run. Another extreme example of confusion was shown in the N.S.W. *Government Gazette*

of 9 September 1848 where two obvious Darling Downs runs were claimed within the jurisdiction of the then Gwydir district: Henry Dangar (Myall Creek), 48,000 acres; Estate of Henry Dennis (now H. Dangar), Gundewinhad, 25,000 acres.

On 10 December 1859, Queensland became a State and passed its first *Lands Act* on 18 September 1860, which was to regulate the occupation of Crown Lands. The area of each run was to be not less than 25 square miles and not more than 100 square miles.

When this Act came into force, it was found that St. Ruth, which had become the property of the North British Australia Company, was holding more territory than it was entitled to (15 by 22 miles, equal to approximately 330 square miles), and Loudoun, Daandine, O.K., Halliford, and many other smaller holdings were carved out of the giant St. Ruth holding.

Wool was originally washed at St. Ruth in order to reduce the weight and haulage costs of the finished product, the location of the wash pool being at the head of a succession of lagoons known as "the chain of ponds" on the western side of the Condamine River, not far below the old St. Ruth woolshed. Shearing machines were installed in 1905. By this time washing had been abandoned for it had been discovered that the grease or "yolk" in the wool could be manufactured into a useful and valuable commodity known as "lanoline."

Both Bon Accord and Loudoun had originally been part of the enormous St. Ruth property, and at that time the boundaries of the four major stations of the area—Jimbour, St. Ruth, Jondaryan, and Greenbank (whose owners were the Ross Brothers)—met almost on the boundaries of the present town of Dalby.

In a marshy area, where Myall Creek wandered and spread on its way to join the Condamine River, came the beginnings of the hamlet which grew into the town of Dalby.

By the time the railway came to Dalby in 1868 the population had increased to 1,500. The present population is 7,500. To-day Dalby has established itself as the wheat capital of Queensland. The wheat lands of the Northern Downs stretch for miles and make a panorama of verdant green against the backdrop of the Bunya Mountains and the Great Dividing Range on the Toowoomba side. The area under wheat is approximately 300,000 acres.

There is also a significant and growing development of secondary industry, and in this connection the important Napier Foundry has played a big part in rounding off the economy of Dalby.—Ed.